

Naval War College Review

Volume 56
Number 2 *Spring*

Article 13

2003

Homeland Security: A Competitive Strategies Approach; Protecting the American Homeland: A Preliminary Analysis

Warren M. Wiggins

Frank G. Hoffman

Michael E. O'Hanlon

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Wiggins, Warren M.; Hoffman, Frank G.; and O'Hanlon, Michael E. (2003) "Homeland Security: A Competitive Strategies Approach; Protecting the American Homeland: A Preliminary Analysis," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 56 : No. 2 , Article 13.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol56/iss2/13>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

their centuries-long failure, and that the best hope for them lies in cooperation with the civilized world and in greater freedom for all their people.” This can be characterized as a “revolutionary war against the tyrants,” one “entirely in keeping with our own national tradition of fighting tyranny.”

The War against the Terror Masters is a book that U.S. military leaders should read as a matter of urgency in order to understand the deadly threat that confronts the United States and its armed forces. The confusion about whether the United States is fighting terrorists or a much more formidable phenomenon, militant Islamic fundamentalism, is exacting a heavy toll. Though the cost has been paid largely in terms of international political support through late 2002, arguably America has been very lucky that it has not been reckoned in lives and destruction from another large-scale atrocity. It is little wonder that Mike Ledeen for months has ended his newspaper columns with “Faster please,” and more recently, “Faster please. What are you waiting for? Another September 11th?”

JAN VAN TOL
Captain, U.S. Navy



Hoffman, Frank G. *Homeland Security: A Competitive Strategies Approach*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Defense Information, 2002. 67pp. (no price given)

O’Hanlon, Michael E., et al. *Protecting the American Homeland: A Preliminary Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002. 188pp. \$17.95

Since the events of 11 September 2001, a multitude of homeland defensive plans have been discussed at every level of

government and the military, centering on the restructuring of existing organizations or increased financing. Each plan focuses on a single phase or group believed to be essential to the safety of our nation. These two books for review take different approaches. *Homeland Security: A Competitive Strategies Approach*, by Frank G. Hoffman, stays out of the tactical and operational level of the “war” and focuses on the strategic level and the planning cycle. *Protecting the American Homeland: A Preliminary Analysis*, by Michael E. O’Hanlon, Peter R. Orszag, Ivo H. Daalder, I. M. Destler, David L. Gunter, Robert E. Litan, and James B. Steinberg, analyzes the problems of national security, determines the progress of current programs, and designs an agenda for future endeavors.

Homeland Security offers a process to enhance U.S. capabilities through a simple “course of action” analysis based on comparisons of known and perceived threats with strategies used by policy makers in recent history. The authors envision three possible categories of attacks against the United States. The first is a missile attack, from intercontinental ballistic missiles or cruise missiles; the second is covert attack or catastrophic terrorism, involving an array of weapons of mass destruction smuggled into the United States; finally, they consider a cyber attack designed to destroy the U.S. information infrastructure. Each method is considered in terms of known and projected capabilities of national and transnational players, and of the four classic strategies of nonproliferation, deterrence, counterproliferation, and preemption. Each “style” has been filtered through these four perspectives to discern strengths and weaknesses.

U.S. vulnerabilities are extensive. It will not be easy to protect the American people. The current approach of organizational restructuring to counter or prevent an attack, and the current assumption that the U.S. military can defend against an assault, may not meet the future need. Hoffman proposes a “serious policy debate” to consider the threat and risks and how to create an environment that will prevent an attack or at least make it very difficult for one to achieve the desired results. Hoffman provides valuable insights into the various strategies of homeland security that could be undertaken by the United States, making it clear that no single plan will suffice. Hoffman also discusses consequence management; if an attack is successful, a plan must be in place to mitigate its results.

Protecting the American Homeland argues that much could be achieved to improve homeland security at a cost that could be absorbed by both the federal government and the private sector. Working under the assumption that our large, open society provides little protection against terrorism, O’Hanlon’s team presents a scheme to complicate terrorists’ actions and therefore force them to engage less lucrative targets (“displacement”) or to continue to plan for a difficult attack in ways that offer an opportunity for U.S. authorities to prevent the attack. The authors argue that first identifying U.S. weaknesses and vulnerabilities will make it possible to correct them or at least lessen the effects of attacks we cannot prevent.

O’Hanlon and his coauthors describe a four-tier approach. Securing U.S. borders is the initial step. They consider it possible only if air defense systems are expanded, a cruise missile defense

system is created, and the Coast Guard and the U.S. Customs Service is extended, so as to improve security at sea, in ports, and over roads and rails. The second step entails preventive measures within U.S. borders to eliminate or reduce the possibility of an attack. This can be achieved by increasing FBI and state and local law-enforcement staffs; improving data collection, analysis, and dissemination; and providing incentives to the private sector by way of insurance and tax incentives to increase security and tracking of employees, production, and the storage and shipment of hazardous materials. The third measure would protect obvious targets. Once again, the concept of displacement is discussed—redirecting terrorist activities from a disastrous plan to one that is considerably less damaging. By concentrating on the protection of targets upon which attacks could be catastrophic—such as nuclear and chemical facilities, large buildings or arenas, national symbols, or critical parts of the national infrastructure—it may be possible to reduce the risk to essential interests. The fourth step deals with consequence management, or the mitigation of the effects of a terrorist act. Effective preparation of first responders is essential here. This preparation can be handled through training for the responders, added capacity to enable the health system to deal with the event, communications and information for the coordination of the relief efforts, and research and development in vaccines and detection equipment.

The remainder of the book deals with the principles for implementing and financing the organizational challenges of homeland security. The book proposes a balance between regulatory and

insurance measures that would pass the cost to users and producers vice the population as a whole. Such measures would have to, as noted, provide incentives (reduced insurance rates) to improve security. Organizationally, the United States could either attempt the “lead agency” approach (a single entity with responsibility for security of the homeland) or the “interagency” approach, an entity that coordinates the many agencies responsible for various segments of the security problem. The authors believe that the Bush administration is on the right track with the interagency method.

Homeland Security is an excellent introduction to strategic approaches to the threats that face this nation. It provides a backdrop for further research into homeland defense. *Protecting the American Homeland* is a logical, flowing, step-by-step analysis to defining policy issues involving the development of a comprehensive protection plan. Both books are useful and thoughtful analyses of homeland security issues.

WARREN M. WIGGINS
Naval War College



Peters, Ralph. *Beyond Terror: Strategy in a Changing World*. Mechanicsburg, Penna.: Stackpole, 2002. 353pp. \$22.95

In *Beyond Terror*, author, historian, and pragmatist Ralph Peters has assembled a collection of his own essays that puts the “post-9/11” world in perspective in terms of the U.S. reaction to the attacks and the historical context in which those attacks occurred.

A retired Army lieutenant colonel and former intelligence officer, Peters has

been engaged in every major U.S. theater, focusing the better part of his professional life on assessing the threats to U.S. national security. *Beyond Terror* offers a clear, unfettered, down-to-earth perspective of the world, as it is, not as the media “spinmeisters” or the “intellectual elite” would have one believe. His is a refreshing and invigorating view of what has made America the singular global force that it is today and what will allow it to maintain that stature in the long-term. He unabashedly believes that this country’s effort to protect its borders and global interests is a righteous one, and he offers some insightful and common sense prescriptions for how the United States should proceed. Peters tempers the enthusiasm for quick fixes to terrorist threats and endeavors to steel the American public for a long, protracted effort that will require every facet of American power and will: “Like crime, terrorism will never be completely eliminated.” What is needed, Peters argues, if the effect of terrorism on the American way of life is to be reduced, is not hand-wringing but an understanding of the terrorists’ intentions and motives, and of their ever more complex tools and planning processes.

The collection of essays presented in this work is arranged in two “theme sets.” In the first, Peters establishes the American reality in a hostile world from a historical perspective. In essence, the United States presently finds itself dealing with the colossal failures of the European colonial era, particularly with respect to the Islamic world, in which Western social, political, and economic ideals failed to take root and now take the terrorists’ blame for the failure and decay of their societies at large. In the context of these failing